



Pg. B1

SPORTS
Steelers Clinch
Playoff Berth

REGION
WACS Students Hold
Clothing Drive



Pg. C1

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"Not only is it getting easier but we're going to continue to get better at it."

A Return To Normalcy

School Administrators Optimistic About Future With Common Core

By **GAVIN PATERNITI**
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Editor's note: This is the sixth article in a 15-part series highlighting the progression of important stories and issues as the new year approaches.

If the first half of the 2014-15 academic year is any indication, the transition to Common Core Learning Standards among public schools seems to be smoothing out.

After a rocky rollout in New York state last year, local administrators and teachers feel that the Common Core is becoming commonplace in the classroom as schools progress through their second year of having fully implemented the new curriculum.

The Common Core was officially adopted statewide in 2010, but was only administered in public schools on a voluntary basis until it was mandated prior to the commencement of the 2013-14 school year. From the beginning, frustration abounded among students, parents and teachers themselves at the inconsistency with which the curriculum modules were released and brand-new math and ELA teaching methods that had

2015

A Look Ahead Before The New Year

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never been previously explored.

Subsequently, teachers struggled to properly teach the new material to students, who, in turn, struggled to grasp the concepts in homework assignments and state assessments. Parents found themselves struggling to assist their children with homework assignments because the material differed from what they were taught as children. Also adding to the stress surrounding the Com-

mon Core rollout was that the new material was released in conjunction with a newly mandated teacher evaluation method — the Annual Professional Performance Review — which ranks teachers on their efficiency in the classroom using various criteria, including student performance on statewide math and ELA assessments under the new curriculum.

The 2013-14 academic year was filled with frustration, confusion and was undoubtedly a time for growing pains. According to area school administrators, 2014-15 is showing signs of promise for the future of the Common Core in New York state schools.

See **COMMON CORE**,
Page A3

Libraries 'Excited' To Make 5-Star Ranking

By **MALLORY DIEFENBACH**
mdiefenbach@post-journal.com

The stars aligned this year for two Chautauqua County libraries.

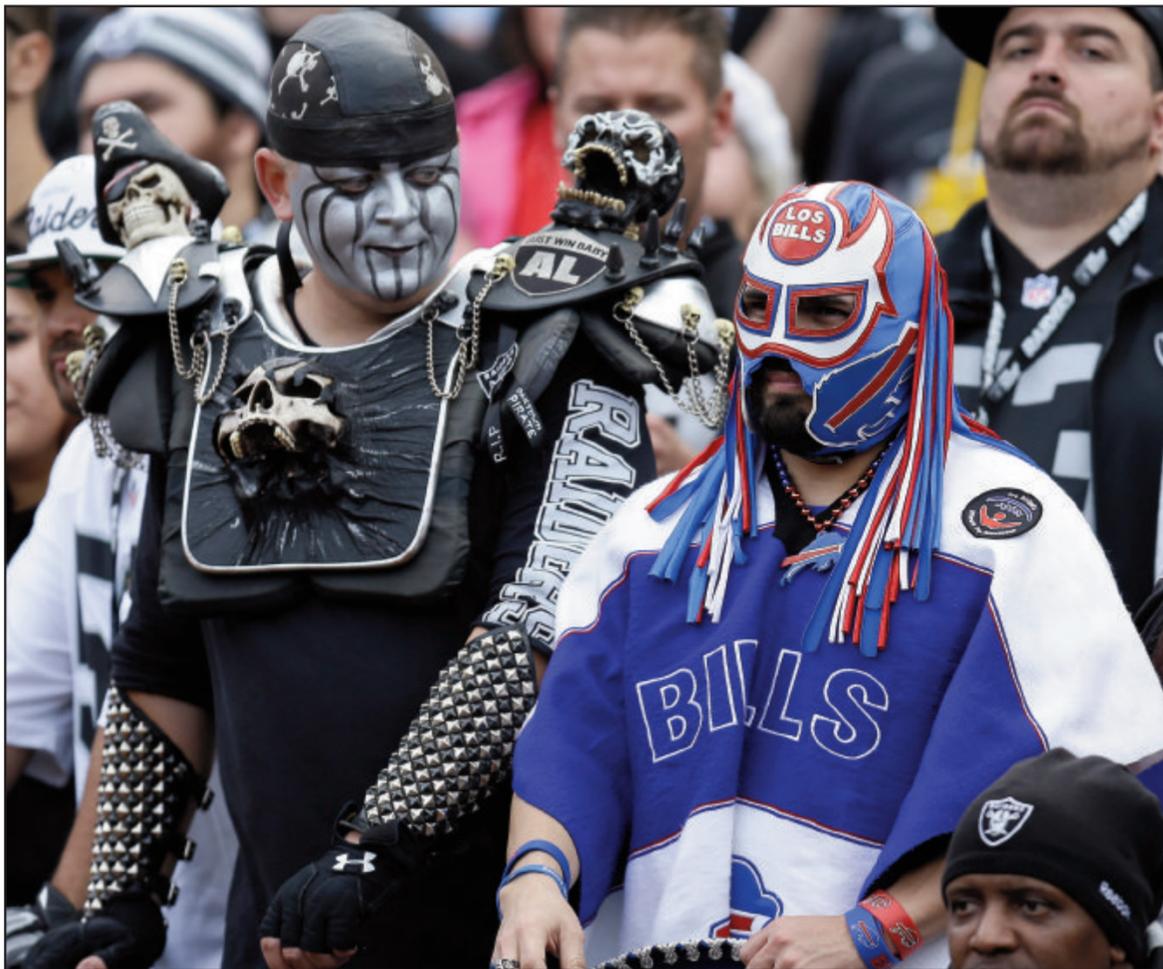
The Falconer Public Library and the Smith Memorial Library both ranked in the top 10 for the \$100,000 to \$199,000 budget category of the 5-Star Ranking in the Library Journal.

The Falconer Public Library placed fourth and the Smith Memorial Library came in sixth. While the Falconer Public Library has made the list for eight years in a row, this was the first year the Smith Memorial Library made the list.

"Actually I was surprised and excited and very proud," said Lynn Kinnear, Smith Memorial Library director, when she learned the Smith Memorial Library ranked in the 5-Star Ranking in the Library Journal. "Especially since I'm planning to retire in a couple months. So, it was a pretty nice honor for the library to receive in my final months of employment."

Located within Chautauqua Institution, the Smith Memorial Library continues to serve the public even during the off-season, acting not only as a library but as a community center. According to Kinnear, the library holds weekly events during the offseason which are well attended.

See
LIBRARY,
Page A3



15 Years And Counting

Bills' Playoff Hopes Dashed Following Loss To Oakland

A Buffalo Bills fan stands between Oakland Raiders fans during the first half of the game between the Oakland Raiders and the Buffalo Bills in Oakland, Calif., on Sunday. Complete coverage can be found in Sports, Page B1.
AP photo



David Johnson posing in the kitchen of his home at his family's Apple Hills Farm in Chenango. While environmental groups are doing a victory dance over New York's decision to ban fracking, farmers such as apple grower David Johnson are grieving for dashed hopes and dreams.

AP file photo

NY Farmers Lament Lost Opportunity For Gas Riches

By **MARY ESCH**
Associated Press

ALBANY — While environmental groups are doing a victory dance over New York's decision to ban fracking, farmers such as apple grower David Johnson are grieving for dashed hopes and dreams.

"I'm devastated," Johnson said after Gov. Andrew Cuomo's health and environmental commissioners announced Wednesday that they were recommending a fracking ban. "I have concerns about how to continue this farm that's been in the family for 150 years."

Energy companies denied the chance to drill in New York can simply raise their rigs in other states. That's what

they've done since the Marcellus Shale gas drilling boom began in 2008 and New York launched an environmental review that effectively put a moratorium in place. But landowners in the state's Southern Tier region who had hoped to reap royalties from gas production don't have that option.

"Frankly, my heart breaks for all those families in the Southern Tier who were denied the opportunity to develop their mineral resources," said Karen Moreau, executive director of the New York branch of the American Petroleum Institute.

New Yorkers have watched other states that sit atop the Marcellus Shale — Ohio, West Virginia and neighboring Pennsylvania — ride the fracking

boom and reap profits from one of the world's largest natural gas deposits. Some New York landowners signed lucrative leases with energy companies and received multi-million-dollar signing bonuses before the natural gas market and the state's regulatory climate soured. But many landowner coalitions never got the chance to sell their leases.

That's fine with landowners who don't want drilling on their land or their neighbors'. Their ranks include many organic farmers, vineyard owners, tourist business operators and town residents who agree with environmental groups that the health risks and changes to the rural landscape outweigh the financial benefits.

See **RICHES**, Page A3

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QUESTION OF THE DAY

After missing the playoffs for the 15th straight season, what should the Bills' organization do?

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Today's Thought

"My mistakes are my life."

— Samuel Beckett,
(1906-1989)

A - LOCAL

Deaths A2
Opinion A4
Nation/World A5

B - SPORTS

NFL Report B1-B3
Scoreboard B6

C - REGION

Comics C3
Most Wanted C4

D - FAMILY

Dear Abby D2
Classifieds D3-D5



Partly
Sunny, 35°
Forecast, Page D6

AREA/STATE/INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Rising Anger As Nicaragua Canal To Break Ground

BY PETER ORSI
Associated Press

RIO GRANDE, Nicaragua — As a conscripted soldier during the Contra War of the 1980s, Esteban Ruiz used to flee from battles because he didn't want to have to kill anyone. But now, as the 47-year-old farmer prepares to fight for his land, Ruiz insists, "I'm not going to run."

Ruiz's property on the banks of Nicaragua's Rio Grande sits in the path of a \$50 billion transoceanic waterway set to break ground on Monday.

Nicaraguan officials will start building access roads on state-owned land as the first step in creating a canal expected to rival that of Panama — a project supporters say will directly employ 50,000 people and dramatically boost the country's GDP.

Farmers like Ruiz insist they'll fight "until the last breath" to protect their land. Whether or not landowners do actually take up arms, Nicaragua's government insists it is determined to push through.

The project is slated to open a huge waterway over what is now the town of Rio Grande, an evangelical-dominated community of 2,000 people with only a dirt road amid fields of corn, beans, banana and sorghum. Everything within 10 kilometers (6 miles) would be subject to expropriation.

But the project, which opponents call President Daniel Ortega's pipe dream, is provoking growing anger.

Many complain Ortega is giving too much away to HKND, the Hong Kong-based company set to develop and operate it. Landowners fear they'll be displaced without fair compensation. Environmentalists accuse the government of ram-rodging past mandated reviews and ignoring the threat that cargo traffic will pose to Lake Nicaragua, the country's main source of fresh water.

Earlier this month, residents of Obrajuelo, a sleepy fishing village on the banks of Lake Nicaragua, threw stones at an SUV carrying a Chinese team that showed up to survey the land. The following day, they burned tires on the Pan-American highway, blocking it for hours. On Dec. 10, as many as 5,000 people marched through the capital, Managua. Even though protesters complained that police blocked canal-opponents trying to arrive from the countryside, observers said it was the largest anti-government action in years.

Such political opposition is virtually unheard of in a country where Ortega's Sandinista party dominates all branches of government, and the president and his wife, the government's powerful communications chief, keep a tight lid on dissent.

"What it shows is that a significant part of the Nicaraguan people have not bought into the canal project," said Francisco Aguirre-Sacasa, an economist, former Nicaraguan foreign minister and ex-ambassador to the United States. "A demonstration of that size, despite the impediments that were put in the way of it, shows that the government is playing with fire in this case."

Projected to span some 173 miles (278 kilometers) between the Caribbean and the Pacific, the canal would be the realization of a dream that has been studied and discarded multiple times since the early 1800s. Backers say it would lift many out of poverty in the Western Hemisphere's second-poorest country.

Last year, Ortega's allies in Congress fast-tracked legislation granting HKND a 50-year concession, renewable for another 50, to build and operate a canal in return for a payment of \$10 million a year once it's up and running. The law lets HKND develop ancillary projects — ports, an airport, roads, a railway — even if it doesn't get built.

HKND hired the respected U.K.-based consulting firm Environmental Resources Management about a year ago to assess the environmental and social impact of a project that is expected to displace some 29,000 people. In late July, just two weeks after HKND announced its preferred route for the canal, ERM held community meetings in seven cities over 10 days, according to a document on HKND's website.

Some who attended the sessions left feeling they were merely being told what was going to happen rather than asked for input. Those who asked how much they would be paid for their lands were told only that officials would go door-to-door to inform them.

"It was so they could say, 'We did the meetings,'" said Rosa Amelia Mora Novoa, a 37-year-old homemaker in Rio Grande who attended the session in Rivas, capital of the department of the same name.

Late last month, HKND announced the environmental and social reports had been completed and found the impact would be minimal. The reports, however, have not been released for public review even as the day neared for the first turn of shovels.

In a written response to questions from The Associated Press, HKND said the reports would be submitted for approval by the Canal Commission and the government in early 2015.

A person with firsthand knowledge of the impact assessments, who lacked authorization to discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity, said not enough time was allotted for proper study and consultation.

Library

From Page A1

Sue Seamans, Falconer Public Library director, said the library's eight-year streak is the result of a combination of factors. She said the library is centrally located as it is near Jamestown Community College, a retirement campus, Falconer Central School, an apartment complex and shares the same building with the village of Falconer administrative offices. She also gives credit to the seven public access computers the library has, which are busy from open to close, and the close relationship the village and library boards have with one another.

"Another factor is the wonderful support from donations," Seamans said, adding that people donate

not only at the annual book-sale but year round as well.

Seamans said she was pleasantly surprised Falconer Public Library ranked again in the 5-Star Ranking.

"There are great opportunities for other libraries to easily be ranked once they get their programming and services in line," she said. "... I think the main thing for libraries is that we are not in competition with one another. We work with one another."

Seamans gave some suggestions to other libraries looking to get in the 5-Star Ranking, including knowing patrons, having consistent hours, having a good rapport with their board and always looking for something new to offer while staying true to the basics.

The award is sponsored by Baker and Taylor's Bibliostat records, and is based on the 2012 data released by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Library Journal Index of Public Libraries covers an evaluation of more than 7,500 libraries in the United States, and only the top 100 make the list. The index uses visits, circulation, program attendance and public Internet computer use statistics to judge libraries, where they identify the top 30 scores.

The Smith Memorial Library is located on the southern end of Bestor Plaza at 21 Miller Ave. inside the grounds of Chautauqua Institution at 1 Ames Ave. in Chautauqua. Off-season hours are Monday

from noon-7 p.m., Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from noon-3 p.m. Summer season hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from noon-3 p.m. For more information, call 357-6296.

The Falconer Public Library is located on 101 W. Main St. in Falconer and is open Monday through Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, the Falconer Public Library can be contacted at 665-3504, ernie@netsync.net or by going online to www.cclslib.org/falconer.

Riches

From Page A1

Johnson, who runs a 30-acre pick-your-own apple farm on his mostly wooded 400 acres in Binghamton, said drilling money would help keep struggling farms in business and create new jobs for the next generation.

"We're just falling apart in the Southern Tier," Johnson said. "I make a living from people coming to my farm. But we're losing population. The people who are left have less money to spend. Every year my business decreases. We try new things, I raise prices, but the trend continues no different from any other industry in the Southern Tier."

Johnson said he'd be more accepting of the Cuomo administration's decision if Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens and Acting Health Commissioner

Howard Zucker had presented some clear scientific basis for a ban. Instead, Martens based part of his decision on the low price of gas and the fact that 63 percent of New York's share of the Marcellus region was off-limits to drilling because of local bans and prohibitions intended to protect water supplies and other features. Zucker emphasized the need for long-term studies to rule out adverse health impacts.

"It was economic and emotional, not technical," Johnson said. "We're good ol' boys down here, just tell it to us straight. This political wishy-washiness is going to put us out of business."

Dan Fitzsimmons, president of the Joint Landowners Coalition of New York, was also critical of the health study findings. "Is our health depart-

ment ignoring impacts of other energy options and suggesting that we continue with our reliance on coal and nuclear energy? Did our health department consider the health effects of poverty and unemployment?"

Other farmers are resigned to the state's decision.

Judi Whittaker, who has a 550-cow dairy in Whitney Point, had hoped to use gas-lease money to pay property taxes.

"If we had been able to get some gas drilling going it would have made our lives a little easier and taken a few of the stresses away," Whittaker said. "We'll just have to rethink what we're doing and move ahead. Agriculture has ups and downs all the time. You just have to go along for the ride."

Common Core

From Page A1

"We're starting to see things getting back to a sense of normalcy," said Kaine Kelly, superintendent of Sherman Central School. "Now that we've had more time to work with it, not everything is being consumed by the challenges of adapting to this new curriculum because the Common Core modules build on themselves — so the students, teachers and parents are becoming more equipped to handle it. So it's not as bad as it was, and not only is it getting easier but we're going to continue to get better at it."

Stephen Penhollow, superintendent of Falconer Central School, said a primary focus of his district has been on the professional development of the teaching staff while also equipping students and their parents with the tools necessary to be successful.

"Things have been much smoother this year," he said. "Having now been through a year of the standards, we now know where we need to supplement and make adjustments. I think the comfort level among teachers has increased because they're able to make connections with those things

they've done in the past and are now able to draw on that past experience."

Penhollow said much has improved in the way Falconer students, teachers and parents have adjusted to the Common Core simply by opening a free-flowing and in-depth line of communication throughout the district. He said constantly communicating with parents and teachers, and providing them with advice, mentoring and proper training, has helped to ease tensions within Falconer's educational community.

That's not to say, however, that the Common Core is no longer without its issues. According to Chris Reilly, president of the Jamestown Teachers Association, many fears have been assuaged but few people in the organization are convinced that the Common Core is the be-all and end-all to righting New York's education system.

"I think, in general, people are more comfortable with it; but at the same time, I haven't found anyone who thinks it's the silver bullet that will cure all or even any educational ills," Reilly said. "I still hear of errors making their way into the New York

state (curriculum) modules, and of concepts and lessons not being age-appropriate. In general, I think people have just resigned themselves to the existence of the Common Core and go on each day attempting to do the best they can."

Tim Mains, superintendent of Jamestown Public Schools, made much of direct professional development training that a portion of JPS staff underwent during the summer months. The three-day training program was administered by representatives of the companies responsible for writing the curriculum modules. He said this training has placed the Jamestown district in a much better position in relation to Common Core implementation this year.

"(The training) gave those folks who received it a real sense of confidence and a better understanding of how things are structured; and those folks, I think, were able to start the year in better shape," Mains said. "Personally, what I've

learned from my experience with this is the key to quality delivery of instruction in the new standards is really understanding what your learning targets are and how those learning targets tie back to the standards."

While acknowledging that implementing Common Core in JPS has had its share of ups and downs, Mains said the overall progress made between last year and this year is palpable.

"To me, it's working properly when it's smooth and things are humming," he said. "I don't think it's running smoothly just yet, but I think we're doing the right thing and I think we're moving in the right direction. What I want is to continue to build the comfort and the confidence of my staff. I know that they work hard and are making every effort to make themselves and their students feel successful, so my job is to make sure that I'm giving them the tools they need to be successful."

AREA POLICE REPORTS

JAMESTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

•Stephen E. Carlson, of Jamestown, was charged with third-degree grand larceny Saturday following a domestic violence incident that occurred at approximately 5 p.m. Officers responded to 23 W. Third St. for a reported larceny call. Upon investigation, it was determined that Carlson had stolen a power wheelchair from a tenant and left the building. Officers were able to locate the wheelchair at Carlson's residence, and returned the wheelchair to the victim. Carlson was later located and charged. He was transported to the Jamestown City Holding Facility pending arraignment.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

•WESTFIELD — A 16-year-old male resident of Westfield was charged with fourth-degree criminal mischief Saturday. At approximately 10:30 p.m.

the subject was charged after he allegedly punched several holes in the walls of an apartment complex. The subject was issued an appearance ticket to appear in Chautauqua Town Court at a later date to answer the charge.

•CLYMER — Theodore J. Jaggi, 54, of Corry, Pennsylvania, received multiple charges following an incident that occurred Sunday. At 3:33 p.m., the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office responded to a single-vehicle property damage accident on Nazareth Road in the town of Clymer. An investigation found that Jaggi was allegedly operating the vehicle in an intoxicated condition. He was taken into custody and charged with failure to maintain lane, speed not reasonable, consumption of alcohol in a motor vehicle, driving while intoxicated and DWI with a blood alcohol content of .08 percent or higher. Jaggi was issued traffic tickets to appear in Clymer Town Court at a later date.

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